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The Spanish series begins with Fernan Caballero's story of *La Familia de Alvarada*, and contains other works well fitted to promote the study of Spanish among us, and very welcome to readers of the language as among the best specimens of the current literature of Spain.

The notes are by competent scholars, and so far as we have examined them are judicious and helpful. All the numbers of the different series are neatly and generally very carefully printed, and form pretty and attractive little volumes. Mr. De Vries deserves great credit for his enterprise in undertaking these publications, and we sincerely trust that he may be encouraged to continue and greatly extend this American library of foreign works.

25.—*The Iliad of Homer rendered into English Blank Verse.* By EDWARD, EARL OF DERBY. In Two Volumes. New York: Scribner. 1865. 8vo. pp. x., 430, and 457.

THERE are two singular superstitions firmly rooted in the English mind,—a belief in the divine efficacy of Greek and of Lords. The one is apparently deemed essential to eternal, as the other to political salvation. To be able to write in the Hellenic character a copy of verses that would have set the teeth of all Athens on edge, is an essential prerequisite for ecclesiastical preferment; comment the Ecclesiastusæ and be a bi-hop; and yet for a noble to condescend to an acquaintance with the language even thus consecrated adds a new lustre to the coronet, and deserves the national gratitude. For the first Earl in England to know *anything*, indeed, is a concession to popular prejudice as unusual as it is gratifying. It is no wonder, then, if the Earl of Derby's translation has been received in England as the unmerited intervention of a superior being in favor of human imperfection. A god descends again to share in this battle of interpreters upon the windy plains of Troy.

There are two theories of translation,—literal paraphrase, and free reproduction. At best, the translation of poetry is but an imitation of natural flowers in cambric or wax; and however much of likeness there may be, the aroma, whose charm of indefinable suggestion in the association of ideas is so powerful, is precisely what is lost irretrievably. From where it lurked in the immortal verse, a presence divined rather than ascertained, baffling the ear which it enchanted, escaping the grasp which yet it thrilled, airy, evanescent, imperishable, beckoning the imagination with promises better than any fulfilment,

“The parting *genius* is with sighing sent.”

The paraphrase is a plaster-cast of the Grecian urn; the reproduction, if by a man of genius, is like Keats's ode, which makes the figures move and the leaves tremble again, if not with the old life, with a sorcery which deceives the fancy. Of all English poets, Keats was the one to have translated Homer.

In any other than a mere prose version of a great poem, we have a right to demand that it give us at least an adequate impression of force and originality. We have a right to ask, If this poem were published now for the first time, as the work of a contemporary, should we read it, not with the same, but with anything like the same conviction of its freshness, force, and originality, its high level of style and its witchery of verse, that Homer, if now for the first time discovered, would infallibly beget in us? Perhaps this looks like asking for a new Homer to translate the old one; but if this be too much, it is certainly not unfair to insist that the feeling given us should be that of life, and not artifice.

The Homer of Chapman, whatever its defects, alone of all English versions has this crowning merit of being, where it is most successful, thoroughly alive. His mastery of English is something wonderful even in an age of masters, when the language was still a mother-tongue, and not a contrivance of pedants and grammarians. He had a reverential sense of "our divine Homer's depth and gravity, which will not open itself to the curious austerity of belaboring art, but only to the natural and most ingenious soul of our thrice-sacred Poesy." His task was as holy to him as a version of Scripture, and he justifies the tears of Achilles by those of Jesus, and the eloquence of his horse by that of Balaam's less noble animal. He does not always keep close to his original, but he sins no more, even in this, than any of his rivals. He is especially great in the similes. Here he rouses himself always, and if his enthusiasm sometimes lead him to heighten a little, or even to add outright, he gives us a picture full of life and action, or of the grandeur and beauty of nature, as stirring to the fancy as his original. Of all who have attempted Homer, he has the topping merit of being inspired by him. With others translation has been a task, more or less loved, but always a task.

The Earl of Derby has chosen blank verse, as best fitted to express the "simplicity" as well as the "freedom and spirit" of Homer. He seems to think rhyme and simplicity incompatible, and to have no conception of rhymed pentameter unless it be chopped into couplets. His study of the measure has apparently been confined to the school of Pope. In Chaucer it flows with a full current, scarcely rippled by the rhyme; Chapman in his *Odyssey* never disturbs us with the epigrammatic click of the couplet; and even Dryden harnesses in, now and

then, a third courser of "far-resounding pace" and breaks from a trot into a gallop. Lord Derby is evidently under the impression that blank verse is something that can be mastered by any one who can count ten on his finger-ends, whereas it is the most difficult of measures. Thus far, perhaps, only three of our poets, Marlow, Shakespeare, and Milton, have shown its full capacity of force and harmony, of passion and grandeur, have written it in short with originality. With scant exception, it is everywhere else mere ritual and repetition. Cowper gave it an easy familiarity, and Tennyson has infused it with almost too much of sweetness, but neither has added any new variety of pause or modulation. Lord Derby's blank verse is of the kind which Dr. Johnson called "verse to the eye," and, were it really a fair specimen of the power and variety of the measure, would justify the Doctor's antipathy. But it is nothing of the kind, never rising above the dead level of "Ferrex and Porrex." His Lordship either carefully avoids the redundant syllable at the end of the line, which, if it become a trick, as in Fletcher, is no doubt offensive, or he is unaware of the use it serves in the hands of Shakespeare and Milton as an agreeable undulation to save uniformity from sameness, and to keep the march of the verse from falling into the monotonous *goose-step* of the drill-sergeant. Lord Derby's verse is verse by the foot-rule, and not by the ear. It is joiner-work, planed and matched with a dexterity and a stiffness which practice will make possible for any one but a poet.

In the recent discussions of Homeric translation in England, it has always been taken for granted that we had or could have some adequate conception of Homer's metre. Lord Derby, in his Preface, plainly assumes this. But there can be no greater fallacy. No human ears, much less Greek ones, could have endured what, with our mechanical knowledge of the verse, ignorance of the accent, and English pronunciation, we blandly accept for such music as Homer chanted. We have utterly lost the tune and cannot reproduce it. Mr. Newman conjectures it to have been something like Yankee Doodle; Mr. Arnold is sure it was the English hexameter; and they are both partly right so far as we may trust our reasonable impressions; for, after all, an impression is all that we have. No doubt the Homeric verse consented at will to an eager rapidity, and no doubt also its general character is that of prolonged but unmonotonous roll. Everybody says it is like the long ridges of the sea, some overtopping their neighbors a little, each with an independent undulation of its crest, yet all driven by a common impulse, and breaking, not with the sudden snap of an unyielding material, but one after the other, with a stately curve, to slide back and mingle with those that follow. Chapman's measure has the disadvantage of an

association with Sternhold and Hopkins, but it has the merit of length, and, where he is in the right mood, is free, spirited, and sonorous. Above all, there is everywhere the movement of life and passion in it. Chapman was a master of verse, making it hurry, linger, or stop short, to suit the meaning. Like all great versifiers, he must be read with study, for the slightest change of accent loses the expression of an entire passage. His great fault as a translator is that he takes fire too easily and runs beyond his author. Perhaps he *intensifies* too much, though this be a fault on the right side; he certainly sometimes weakens the force of passages by crowding in particulars which Homer had wisely omitted, for Homer's simplicity is by no means mere simplicity of thought, nor, as it is often foolishly called, of nature. It is the simplicity of consummate art, the last achievement of poets and the invariable characteristic of the greatest among them. To Chapman's mind once warmed to its work, the words are only a mist, suggesting, while it hides, the divine form of the original image or thought; and his imagination strives to body forth that, as he conceives it, in all its celestial proportions. Let us take a passage where he merely intensifies (Book XIII., beginning at the 86th verse in Lord Derby, the 73d of Chapman, and the 76th of Homer):—

“ Whom answered thus the son of Telamon :
 ‘ My hands, too, grasp with firmer hold the spear,
 My spirit, like thine, is stirred ; I feel my feet
 Instinct with fiery life ; nor should I fear
 With Hector, son of Priam, in his might
 Alone to meet, and grapple to the death.’ ”

Thus Lord Derby. Chapman renders :—

“ This Telamonius thus received : ‘ So, to my thoughts, my hands
 Burn with desire to toss my lance ; *each foot beneath me stands*
Bare on bright fire to use his speed ; my heart is raised so high,
 That to encounter Hector's self I long insatiably.’ ”

There is no question which version is the more energetic. Is Lord Derby's nearer the original in being tamer? He has taken the “instinct with fiery life” from Chapman's hint. The original has simply “restless,” or more familiarly “in a fidget.” There is nothing about “grappling to the death,” and “nor should I fear” is feeble where Chapman with his “long insatiably” is literal. We will give an example where Chapman has amplified his original (Book XVI. v. 426; Derby, 494; Chapman, 405):—

“ Down jumped he from his chariot ; down leapt his foe as light ;
 And as, on some far-looking rock, a cast of vultures fight,
 Fly on each other, strike and truss, part, meet, and then stick by,
 Tug both with crooked beaks and seres, cry, fight, and fight and cry,
 So fiercely fought these angry kings.”

Lord Derby's version is nearer : —

“ He said, and from his car, accoutred, sprang ;
 Patroclus saw and he too leaped to earth,
 As on a lofty rock, with angry screams,
 Hook-beaked, with talons curved, two vultures fight,
 So with loud shouts these two to battle rushed.”

Chapman has made his first line out of two in Homer, but, granting the license, how rapid and springy is the verse ! Lord Derby's “ withs ” are not agreeable, his “ shouts ” is an ill-chosen word for a comparison with vultures, “ talons curved ” is feeble, and his verse is, as usual, mainly built up of little blocks of four syllables each. “ To battle ” also is vague. With whom ? Homer says that they rushed each at other. We shall not discuss how much license is loyal in a translator, but, as we think his chief aim should be to give a feeling of that life and spirit which makes the immortality of his original, and is the very breath in the nostrils of all poetry, he has a right to adapt himself, not to the exactions of art, — whose “ *traits sont bien differens à Paris et à Vérone*,” as Voltaire absurdly said, — but to the genius of his own language. If he would do justice to his author, he must make up in one passage for his unavoidable shortcomings in another. He may here and there take for granted certain exigencies of verse in his original which he feels in his own case. Even Dante, who boasted that no word had ever made him say what he did not wish, should have made an exception of rhyming ones, for these sometimes, even in so abundant a language as the Italian, have driven the most straightforward of poets into an awkward *détour*. In Homer, for example, surely one need not always repeat the genealogical fact that Hector was the son of Priam.

We give one more passage from Chapman : —

“ And all in golden weeds
 He clothed himself ; the golden scourge most elegantly done
 He took and mounted to his seat ; and then the god begun
 To drive his chariot through the waves. From whirl-pits every way
 The whales exulted under him, and knew their king ; the sea
 For joy did open, and his horse so swift and lightly flew
 The under axle-tree of brass no drop of water drew.”

Here the first half is sluggish and inadequate, but what surging vigor, what tumult of the sea, what swiftness, in the last ! Here is Lord Derby's attempt : —

“ All clad in gold, the golden lash he grasped
 Of curious work, and, mounting on his car,
 Skimmed o'er the waves ; from all the depths below
 Gambolled around the monsters of the deep,
 Acknowledging their king ; the joyous sea
 Parted her waves ; swift flew the bounding steeds,
 Nor was the brazen axle wet with spray.”

Chapman here is truer to his master, and the motion is in the verse itself. Lord Derby's is description, and not picture. "Monsters of the deep" is an example of the hackneyed periphrases in which he abounds, like all men to whom language is a literary tradition, and not a living gift of the Muses. "*Lash*" is precisely the wrong word. Chapman is always great at sea. Here is another example from the Fourteenth Book : —

"And as, when with unwieldy waves *the great sea forefeels winds*
That both ways murmur, and no way her certain current fuds,
But pants and swells confusedly, here goes, and there will stay,
Till on it air casts one firm wind, and then it rolls away."

He is great, too, in single phrases and lines : —

"And as, from top of some steep hill, the Lightener strips a cloud
And lets a great sky out of Heaven, in whose delightful light
All prominent foreheads, forests, towers, and temples cheer the sight."

Book XVI. v. 286.

The lion "lets his rough brows down so low they hide his eyes"; the flames "wrestle" in the woods; and so in a hundred other instances.

In a very judicious and discriminating review of Lord Derby's version, we have seen Chapman censured as *extravagant*, and this is perfectly just in the sense that he wanders outside his text. He is often also crabbed and obscure. But we have chosen to cite him only to show the difference between a mechanical and a vivid rendering. Lord Derby is full of the commonplaces of the worst school of English poetry, and often goes as wide of his original as Chapman. He *modernizes* even more. Take a familiar passage of the First Book : —

"Along Olympus' heights he passed, his heart
Burning with wrath; behind his shoulders hang
His bow and ample quiver; at his back
Rattled the fateful arrows as he moved;
Like the night-cloud he passed, and from afar
He bent against the ships and sped the bolt,
And fierce and deadly twanged the silver bow.
First on the mules and dogs, on man at last,
Was poured the arrowy storm."

This is both loose and feeble. Chapman does not rouse himself here, as we should expect, — indeed, he tells us that he did not fairly warm to his work in the first twelve books, — but his "Down from the tops of steep heaven stooped" is better than "Along Olympus' heights he passed." "*Burning with wrath*" is a commonplace of his Lordship's. The word of Homer (Χόρμαι) means primarily to move violently and hence derivatively to be angry, because anger expresses itself in gesture. So here "throbbing with wrath" would be nearer, and below, where Homer repeats the word, the wrathful movement of the God is implied.

"Fateful" is not in Homer. Lord Derby apparently took it on the suggestion of Dryden, whose "feathered fates," repeated by Pope, is even worse. "Night-cloud" darkens the sense. "Like Night" says Homer simply, that is, darkened with anger. "Bolt," if taken in its proper English meaning, arms Apollo with a cross-bow. Perhaps Lord Derby wished to give the Homeric alliteration of βέλως and βάλλ', but even then "shaft" would have answered his purpose, and "shot" would have been better than "sped," which is one of those attempts to avoid the familiar, as if the trite were better, of which Pope set the example. The suddenness of Homer's βάλλ', standing alone at the head of the verse with an abrupt pause after it, and making the phrase *twang*, as it were, is admirable, and should put a translator on his mettle. The "arrowy storm" is as bad as it can be; a single bowman "pours" nothing of the kind. It is one of those common-property phrases too frequent with Lord Derby, the mere shoddy which verse-makers keep at hand for filling-in. Tickell's version of this passage is painfully halting for a man who could write original verses good enough to be favorites with Thackeray; and Pope rivals him, drawing out "the weighty bullion of the line" into "French wire" of rare tenuity. Dryden, who wrote more sensibly than anybody else about translation, flounders helplessly in Homer. Cowper attempts to give the ring of the ἀργυρέοιο βιοῖο by

"Dread-sounding, bounding on the silver bow,"

which only too fatally recalls the old Scottish dancing-tune, —

"Amasit I gaisit
To see, led at command,
A strampant and rampant
Ferss lyon in his hand."

The attempt was in the right direction, however, for Homer, like Dante and Shakespeare, like all who really command language, seems fond of playing with assonances.

We do not mean to say that Lord Derby's translation is comparatively a failure, for it is better than those of his two latest predecessors. Pope's was a piece of job-work, maintained with singular spirit to the end, it is true, and with many fine lines, full of that nervous energy which characterizes his verse; but it was job-work nevertheless. Too often he vapors and rants where he should be passionate, and puts us off with tumidity as cheaper than simple grandeur. The bass-drum plays too large a part in his rather limited orchestra. There is something incongruous with the true Homeric sentiment in his style, an anachronism of costume, as it were, like Garrick playing Macbeth in a major-general's uniform. Cowper's translation, whatever its mer-

its, and it has many, is not easy reading. His own "John Gilpin" is more Homeric. That, at least, gallops; but here he seems to have mounted an elephant by mistake for Pegasus, and he whose own blank verse has the ease of prose is as stiff and unwieldy in the armor of Milton as the champion on a Lord Mayor's day. In comparing Lord Derby with Chapman, we did not mean to put the old poet above him for mere closeness of rendering, but to bring into strong relief the difference between the soul and the body of poetry, and to hint that it takes a poet to translate a poet. Which should we prefer, — a cast taken unmistakably after death, or a likeness, less obviously true, perhaps, to the mere features, but instinct with the expression and genius of the original? With all his faults, Chapman has made for us the best poem that has yet been Englished out of Homer, and in so far gives us a truer idea of him. Of all translators he is farthest removed from the fault with which he charges others, when he says that "our divine master's most ingenious imitating the life of things (which is the soul of a poem) is never respected nor perceived by his interpreter's only standing pedantically on the grammar and words, utterly ignorant of the sense and grace of him." The Earl of Derby has achieved, on the other hand, a most fatally respectable translation, a Homer toned down to the decorum of the drawing-room, shaved, with irreproachable candor of neck-tie, and speaking the too faultless English of the House of Lords after it has been groomed by the "Times" reporter. In spite of his Lordship's contempt for the English hexameter, we are inclined to think that *the* translation is yet to be made in that measure by some young poet, who has not so far stiffened into a mannerism of his own, as insensibly to sophisticate Homer with it. We have said that Keats might have done it. Perhaps the late Mr. Clough, with his thorough Greek scholarship and his exquisitely pliant genius, would have been even more competent. Among his manuscripts are some fragments of a version full of promise. The hexameter is as alien to German as to English, yet it grows supple and homely to the master-hand of Goethe. Even Voss makes it give a better notion of Homer than Lord Derby's blank verse. His Lordship's concluding line,

"Such were the rites to glorious Hector paid,"

hardly comes so near the original as even the following attempt at an hexameter by a sleepy reviewer who never wrote one before, —

"So paid they funeral-rites to Hector, the tamer of horses."